

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SATIRE IN WOLE SOYINKA'S PLAYS: THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO, MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS and THE LION AND THE JEWEL.

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Abstract: This executive summary of this research work is hinged on the purpose of the study which was to critically investigate Satire in Wole Soyinka's three Plays namely: The Trials of Brother Jero, 1963, Madmen and Specialists, 1971 and The Lion and The Jewel, 1963. It highlights and describe the salient manifestation and the operation of Satire in the named three works of art. The study was to bridge the academic research links within the past research and discussions concerning Satire based on Wole Soyinka's Plays. This study was strictly to help in comprehending styles used in the three plays which reveals Satire usage, and in so doing, discovering that such devices are not held in isolation but rather as integral parts of Satire in Wole Soyinka's work of art. The study was informed by Wole Soyinka's life history, academic life and ideological thinking prowess. The target population for this study was strictly three plays by Wole Soyinka. This was to aid in putting his satirical works into context and comprehending the forces that could be responsible for such creative works. This background information helped in contextualizing his Yoruba cultural background and its tradition in shaping his line of thinking and therefore writing prowess thereof exhibited in the three plays as mentioned in the title of this study above. This study handled Satire as that which is normally expressed in a light and laughable manner concerning general human weaknesses, tendencies, and failures, thus giving a very formidable background to highlight and describe satire in Soyinka's plays. In the Plays by Wole Soyinka, this study grouped Satire into six broader categories: thus, Satire on religion, religious leaders and their followers, Satire on adherents of foreign education, Satire on people who cherish other people's ways of life, Satire on leadership particularly the political class, Satire on man's inhumanity and pervasive corruption in the structures of power, and the last category is satire for the absurdity. Finally, this study has some recommendations on future research works by other researchers and what could be done better to improve on the existing research gaps that this research has identified. Literary theory and Criticism formed the basis of this research work and was guided by the traits of socialist/Marxist theory. Marxist theory focuses on different tenets with the concept of seeing human liberation; the theory emanated from the works of Karl Marx in conjunction with Friedrich Engels. Contextual methodology through use of relevant texts with satire was used. Documentary analysis was at use in extracting pertinent data from the three selected plays by Wole Soyinka. The researcher used qualitative method in analyzing data from the three plays by Wole Soyinka.

Keywords: Satire, Religion, institutions, works of art, Invective, theory.

INTRODUCTION

Wole Soyinka's immeasurable creative contribution to the African literature through academic works has not only positively impacted on the social and economic plus the political spheres within Nigeria but the entire continent of Africa and the world at large. The prolific Nigerian writer has spurred discussions within academic circles, drawing discussions and reviews on the major themes and ideas he espouses but much has not been done on the style and satire that is evident in his works of art. Evidently, this over-concentration on content (the major themes and ideas) of Wole Soyinka through reviewers and other literary luminaries has resulted in a vacuum in some spheres that operate outside of this study such as satire. The essence of having a review of what writers and scholars have done in this field is to show gaps or lack of actual traces of relevancy in three plays of Wole Soyinka, keeping and maintaining the scope of this study, which was strictly three plays on Satire. The study was limited to only three plays by Wole Soyinka. In The Trials of Brother Jero (1963), the researcher focused on religious satire

and the leaders, under the play *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), the researcher focused on Satire on man's inhumanity and pervasive corruption in structures of power and finally, in *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), the researcher focused on Satire on adherents of foreign education, manner of dating, marriage, clothing and the general foreign culture. The three plays for this research work are relevant because satire is dominant. These plays by the iconic West African Literature Laureate, Wole Soyinka cherish one commonality, that is, the dominant use of Satire as a tool to send message home to the broader Literature readership across the globe and not only in Africa. This study, therefore, looked at the employment of satire and the associated stylistic devices that helps propel the satiric nature of Wole Soyinka's works.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literary theory and Criticism formed the basis of this research work and was guided by the traits of socialist/Marxist theory. Literary theory is sometimes designated as the Critical theory which, according to this study did satisfactorily provide a basis within which the theory of literary critical work can be comprehended as the set of ideas and academic work on which bases the work of explicating and interpreting literary texts, like the three selected plays by Wole Soyinka. Marxist theory focuses on different tenets with the concept of seeing human liberation; the theory emanated from the works of Karl Marx in conjunction with Friedrich Engels. This theory hinges on belief that every person's attempts at any economic activity or undertaking are purely motivated by the fact that there seems to be an economic gain or reward thereafter. The argument of Marxist is that every society will in a rather automatic manner have an element of differences in people's socio-economic levels that will also trigger divisions on the ground of those who have been empowered and those that are less endowed, an economic war then becomes inevitable. Such proposition is held dear in Wole Soyinka's Play *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963) where the rich have found refuge in religion, duping the unsuspecting followers. Marxist Theory operates under the following tenets; First and foremost, that society is fragmented into groups or classes of the economically gifted popularly known as the bourgeoisie and the very poor also called the Proletariat, secondly, most if not all of our human activities are essentially guided by our desires for economic needs, thirdly, the rich will continue being rich even if it means impoverishing the already poor and finally, Society will always use ideology as a tool to keep the poor at the bottom of the social structure without the poor realizing it. All these tenets have a bearing on the manner in which Wole Soyinka has packaged his message through satire in the three plays. Marxist's ideas especially on the issues of capitalism and social change helped this research work in using Wole Soyinka's plays to appreciate that competition amongst the religious leaders at the Nigerian beaches leads to an increase in the negative exploitation of the majority poor masses. This Marxism theory enabled this study in appreciating that with an increase in material property under the disguise of capitalism, a segment of the larger Nigerian society feels alienated from the actual life processes since they mostly lack control over their daily hustles and livelihood. Finally, this theory of Marxism availed the knowledge that ideological control by the few religious leaders who hide under the guise of religion will always use their control over church institutions to keep their masses who are naturally ignorant of the hidden intentions of exploitation therein. Literary theory which formulates the actual relationship between the author and their works of art significantly informed the controversial concerns like gender, social class and race that are perennial levels of concern over the three plays by Wole Soyinka; this is pertinent since from the standpoint of the life and history of Wole Soyinka, his life informs what he cherishes in the societal affairs of Nigeria being described in the three plays, *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) and *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963). Aristotle was a great thinker and immensely contributed to different fields of art, science and literature. Some of his contributions are the ones that will be used in guiding this research work. Aristotle developed his seven (7) virtues popularly referred to as Aristotle's 7 virtues. In his life dedication to art and creative thinking prowess, Aristotle contributed immensely to the actual studying and application of salient issues that could otherwise guide in proper living, being honest, men and women of integrity and incorruptible in the public eyes. Some of the virtues that Aristotle espoused include but not limited to compassion, Trust, Wisdom, justice and the application of wisdom; He interrogated ways in which the seven virtues mold the overall personality of an individual. The seven virtues are what Wole Soyinka is questioning in his characters in the three plays of *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) and *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), through use of Satire. Satire is a tool Wole Soyinka has employed to question the moral decay in the Nigerian social fabric, thus, the theory of morals by Aristotle, in comparison with the theory by the philosopher Plato has roots that hinge on distinct virtues, it dwells directly on how applicable the virtuous code of living and its correlation to being happy in life. Tragical theory as postulated under the auspices of Aristotle's prowess in which the element of tragical power is held in contrast to what another able

philosopher called Plato espoused, reveals that the general moral lack of clarity is the actual gist of widespread occurrence of life tragedy. He says, a real tragic character must not be a societal failure or be a very good man indeed, this leaves one character without a choice between two extremes as indicated in the two philosophies. According to Wellek and Warren, a difference existing between one literary theory, the theory of criticism and the overall world history is evident in the actual variances existing between a major perspective held on creative literature being systematic arrangement against the belief that literature is ordinarily used as a stream of creative works of art grouped in an orderly manner as important segment of the actual daily life streams. Wellek and Warren categorizes the actual literary theory with a touch of underlying guidelines of creative works of art, those guidelines, give birth to the actual theoretical criterion through level differentiation and the general approaches to the explications of research works given with timelines down the history lane of a given society. In the same vein, The English Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, New 8th Edition (1548) has important information on theory by way of definition that states it as the formal set of ideas that is intended to explain why something happens or exists..., the principles on which a particular subject is based. This research work therefore based its arguments on the above lines to authenticate it that language is used aesthetically by Wole Soyinka in his three plays, in an endeavor to send his messages home. Satire has indeed also been used as an effective vessel or tool in trying to comprehend a social set-up as it provides keenest prisms on a given people's common psyche, revealing their deepest values and tastes and the society's structures of power.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Being library-based research, it was an exploratory study that employed descriptive design in analyzing satire in the three plays by Wole Soyinka. This research was based on the findings read from three plays, and library research availed core data available from the relevant sources. This research applied the APA referencing method which was used in the process of documentation of the information in the research work. Sifting of data collected from the library research work and other sources helped in realization of the final information. The data was subsequently divided into three categories. The first category involved Wole Soyinka's background to the three plays. Next stage comprised of detailed information on the salient stylistic devises. The third and last category entailed what the critics say about the creative works of Wole Soyinka concerning Satire in the three plays of *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) and lastly, *The Lion and The Jewel* (1963). This third and last category gave this study a ground because it could be null and void if satire in Wole Soyinka's three plays had been intensively and extensively done by other researchers. It is against this background that the objectives of this study were firmly established.

Target Population

According to Lavrakas P. J in his article, *SAGE research Methods* (2008), He postulates that target population means similar people or characters or indeed objects for which a specific survey of a given research data is used to make the general conclusion. Wole Soyinka has written several plays which include but not limited to *The Strong Breed* (1963), *The Lion and The Jewel* (1963), *A Dance of the Forests* (1963), *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Kong's Harvest* (1967), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1973), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), *The Road* (1965), *From Zia, with Love* (1992), *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1995), the Parody, named *King Baabu* (2002) among other plays. It is against this background information that the researcher's target population for this research consisted of only three plays by Wole Soyinka, thus, *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) and lastly, *The Lion and The Jewel* (1963). The three plays by Wole Soyinka were selected out of the many because satire is dominant and therefore very vital in the realization of the set objectives of this research work.

The Sampling Procedure

Sampling is from the word sample and a sample is simply defined as the consortium of related objects, human beings or any inanimate items which share common identities or attributes, and the researcher has got interest in. Samples are normally taken as being good presentations of the larger population from which they are got; for this research work to be clearly representative of the larger population, this research work generalized the final

findings from the research sample in line with the larger population (Wikipedia, 2022) In line with this sampling procedure, purposive sampling was used to sample the **three** plays by Wole Soyinka, thus, The Trials of Brother Jero (1963), Madmen and Specialists (1971) and lastly, The Lion and The Jewel (1963). Purposive sampling which is sometimes regarded as judgmental sampling is a form of non-probability sampling indicated by researchers based on their own assessment during the selection process, determining who or which of the sample within the population to participate in the surveys. This sampling method uses samples in line with the researchers' specifications or needs which came in handy for this study; other samples that do not meet the researcher's specifications are basically excluded in the research procedure. This study used the purposive sampling because purposive sampling is less complicated, and all that the researcher was required to do was to reject the other texts that do not fit the category of satirical plays when creating the sample for purpose of this particular research work. Finally, purposive sampling was chosen since it has the ability to aid the researcher to get enough helpful information out of the raw data that was to be gathered from texts named, this consequently let the researcher make up for the important impact of the findings on Wole Soyinka's three plays. It was also chosen because it was found to be time-effective compared to other sampling methods.

Data Collection Method and Procedure

Being a library-based research work, the researcher found it pertinent to employ contextual methodology which entails the actual utilization of the academic content and skills by use of relevant real-world problems and projects to help researcher understand the application of the much sought-after knowledge, finally, Documentary analysis was at use in extracting pertinent data from the three plays by Wole Soyinka.

Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

The researcher used qualitative method in analyzing data from the **three** selected plays by Wole Soyinka, The Trials of Brother Jero (1963), Madmen and Specialists (1971) and The Lion and The Jewel (1963), and to relate the data to the objectives of this study, contextual analysis was used to analyze the data. This method is mainly used in qualitative research as a method of qualitative analysis. In line with this selection of qualitative method, the researcher used a contextual analysis approach which is simply an analysis of a text in whatever medium, that help the researcher to assess a particular text having a unique context of its original history and cultural setting but also in terms of its textuality or the qualities that characterize the text as being one. This therefore means that the researcher analyzed the three plays by Wole Soyinka in full appreciation of the writer's context, thus, socio-economic, and political realms considered. Finally, the researcher then conducted necessary summaries giving relevant recommendations that can be used as remedies to answer pertinent question of how best a writer can use satire in their works of art to send their message(s) home in the contemporary society.

FINDINGS

Wole Soyinka used satire as a tool to package the message of criticizing the shortcomings of the society being described in his three plays; He successfully use laughable narration to communicate the message, The play, The Trials of Brother Jero (1963) is centered on the rogue, hypocritical protagonist named brother Jero, a beach prophet who decides to use Christianity to line his pockets. He regards his congregants as 'goldfield', exploiting their ignorance as exemplified by his assistant Chume using exaggeration; a writer can deal with a very sensitive topic using friendly, laughable but biting humour that informs the whole topic of satire. In the same vein, it was found out that Irony, sarcasm and rhetorical questions that amuse facilitate achievement satire usage. Brother Jero comments,

"You have probably seen many of us on the streets, many with their own churches, many Inland, many on the coast, many leading processions, many looking for procession
To lead, many curing the deaf, many raising the dead. In fact, there are eggs and there are eggs..." (Soyinka Plays:1, 1964; p. 3)

Secondly, Wole Soyinka used stylistic devices to achieve satire. For instance, he has used Irony, exaggeration, Invective, sarcasm among others to achieve satire. Through sarcasm, religious leaders in the play, The Trials of Brother Jero are ridiculed by Wole Soyinka. this is seen in the way the church leaders have shifted their physical

location to beaches, the common knowledge has it that a beach is a recreational place where people laze around half-naked in their best way possible; this is where Brother Jero's church is located in the apparent struggle for land. Religious leaders are satirized as those who do not stand for anything serious, they use their appearances to masquerade their true identities, thus,

"I am a prophet. A prophet by birth and by inclination... I was born a prophet. I think my parents found that I was born with rather thick and long hair. It was said to come right down to my eyes and down to my neck. For them, this was a certain sign that I was born a natural prophet..." (Soyinka Plays:1, 1964; p. 3)

Thirdly, Through the Style of Use of Rhetorical Questions, Soyinka achieves satire in the play, *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) by introducing two world views; the Afrocentric view and the Eurocentric view, turning the play into an ideological warfare between these two extremes, the weaknesses, folly and foible of the main characters therein are scathingly satirized, providing ground for satire, especially the theme of Western education that has come under critical scrutiny by Wole Soyinka as a satirist. The Western education seen in the eyes of the modernist Lakunle is satirized as a mere product of boastful and optimistic youths who promises heaven on earth without much consideration of the required socio-economic structures in place and time factor; Lakunle is seen as an epitome of modernism, clashing against the traditionalist old Baroka is out to maintain the status quo. Wole Soyinka Through exaggerated instances of Irony, is bitterly criticizing through Juvenalian satire the way and manner in which the leaders that be misuse their positions to for selfish gains; for example old Baroka brags about having taken long time of four full months without having added another new wife to his bulging number of women; to this satirical end, the writer is decrying the Africanity in which women are treated as mere objects that are there to sexually satisfy their husbands and nothing else than child bearing and being cornered to the kitchen; Soyinka humorously satirizes the words of old Baroka, "It is five full months since last I took a wife... five full months..." (Soyinka, *Collected Plays*:2, p. 11). Wole Soyinka satirizes Man's Inhumanity and pervasive nature of corruption in the structures of political power. This is depicted in the play, *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) which is considered Soyinka's most pessimistic play dealing with man's inhumanity and pervasive corruption in the structures of power. The plot of this morbid play revolves around Dr. Bero, a corrupt medical specialist who imprisons and torments his physician father in an utter attempt to exert baseless revenge; such inhumanity that is callous to the extent of being meted out on close relatives and countrymen and women is what provides fodder for Wole Soyinka to satirize. Soyinka satirize the whole action of the play which takes place in and around the home surgery of Dr. Bero, who has recently returned from the civil war, his mental disorientation is meted out on the old man who is his father.

CONCLUSION

The study findings reveal that Wole Soyinka successfully employed satire in his **three** plays, *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) and finally in *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) In these three literary plays, Wole Soyinka effectively used language and the power of words to vividly communicate his message to the diverse audiences. The characters in the three texts have been used as vessels of carrying Soyinka's satirical message(s). In *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1963), Soyinka applied satire to scathingly criticize the shortcomings of society. The play is about the protagonist, prophet Jeroboam, popularly known to his congregation of followers as Brother Jero, a beach prophet who decides to use Christianity to become rich. To Brother Jero, the beach is his sole source of income. He exploits the ignorance of his flock especially the presumed personal assistant Chume and many more unsuspecting, meek and submissive followers who are incidentally taken for a ride. In the practice of exploiting his submissive flock, Soyinka brings to the fore the nagging, stubborn and impenitent character in the name of Amope, the wife of Chume. She is depicted in the role of a local trader dealing in simple wares and the writer successfully use her role to further expose the weaknesses of prophet Jeroboam. Using Amope, Brother Jero is portrayed as an indebted church leader whose folly and foible is found in not honoring to pay back his creditors among other follies as given in this study. From a critical analysis of *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) by Wole Soyinka, the researcher discovered that the play is a morbid and difficult one which is highly satirical, defying easy explanation. The author portrays a high compression of facts, compression of political criticism and the satirical taste for the absurd. The satirical play accumulates an atmosphere of horror and the grotesque through elements of escalating unreason and eventually cannibalism, which both contribute to a world of seemingly disorders amongst the characters used. The play loses a sense of reasoning as the story progresses, the play leaves utter unchained ambitions and intentions of individual annihilation among other absurdities. This is

coined in the satirical lines said by one main character, the old man to a minor one, “You have lost the gift of self-disgust” Finally, in the third play, *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), the researcher critically found out that the author presented the vicious confrontation between the modernists and the traditionalists, providing fodder for the playwright to satirize the whole situation. Soyinka ridicules through use of humour the comedy and funny story involving four main characters. Lakunle is a schoolteacher of the village school, a twenty-three-year-old bent on bestowing Western culture and education onto the people of Ilujinle. Sidi is the jewel, the village belle of Ilujinle whose beauty has been captured by a photographer and published in a magazine. Old Baroka is the Lion of Ilujinle, who is the chief with several wives and the final major character is Sadiku, the lion’s head wife. In this satirical play, both Bale Baroka and Lakunle love Sidi and it is from this background that Soyinka used the tool of satire to settle the high stakes at play. The researcher therefore concluded that, the set objectives of this study were achieved. The researcher identified and evaluated the use of satire in the selected plays by Wole Soyinka, portraying the effective use of satire and stylistic devices to bring out the criticized human weaknesses, follies, foibles and tendencies of society conforming with such vices, and in the process the author urging for precise correction of the same in these three plays.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The researcher recommends some significant shifts in the literary artists so that they practically start using language and the power of words to vividly communicate their messages to their diverse audiences or readers. First, the literary writers need to embrace stylistic devices that lead to satire, for instance, writers should aptly embrace the use of Irony, sarcasm, humour, understatement, exaggeration and invective among other tools that create satire in creative literary texts. Satire provides these artists one such medium for language use, just like the African literary giant and Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka has successfully used satire in sending his messages home in the three plays to a point that he is well known and appreciated as a literary satirist. Researchers and authors should start working more on literary issues related to satire. Secondly, the researcher recommends that writers who embrace satire as a literary tool should emulate examples of successful writers like Wole Soyinka and in so doing and adopting satire as an effective literary packaging tool, should effectively choose their diction whose power will provoke laughter in the audience and keep them “listening” as the writers bitterly condemn vices, follies and urge serious correction in the society. Thirdly, more research on satirical works of literature from scholars is required to create more detailed information on how satire can be an instrument of exposing human weaknesses, follies and foible using characters in various literary texts. In the same vein, A careful investigation on how stylistic devices can be used to bring out satire and portrayal in literary texts is essentially needed; such research efforts are needed to gain profound perceptions of these kinds of literary texts, which represent the need for satire in exposing human weaknesses in the society. Critical theoretical resources are required, to know more on how satire is used in contemporary literary writings not only by Wole Soyinka but also from other writers. Finally, the researcher recommends the use of this research work as a starting point or steppingstone in the endeavour to further research work on the whole subject of satire.

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